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THE SPAGNOLETTA,

A Play,

IN 5 ACTS,

BY

EMMA LAZARUS.

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UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT.

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[UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT.]

THE SPAGNOLETTA.

BY

EMMA LAZARUS.

1876.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

DON JOHN OF AUSTRIA.

JOSEF RIBERA, the Spagnoletto.

LORENZO, noble young Italian artist, pupil of Ribera.

DON TOMMASO MANZANO.

LUCA, servant to Ribera.

A GENTLEMAN.

FIRST LORD.

SECOND LORD.

MARIA-ROSA, daughter to Ribera.

ANNICCA, daughter to Ribera, and wife to Don Tommaso.

FIAMETTA, servant to Maria-Rosa.

ABBESS.

LAY-SISTER.

FIRST LADY.

SECOND LADY.

Lords, Ladies, Gentlemen, Servants.

*Scene—During the first four acts, in Naples ; latter part of the fifth act, in
Palermo. Time, about 1655.*

THE SPAGNOLETTA.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Studio of the SPAGNOLETTA. RIBERA at work before his canvas. MARIA seated some little distance behind him; a piece of embroidery is in her hands, but she glances up from it incessantly toward her father with impatient movements.*

(*RIBERA, absorbed in his work, makes no reply; she puts by her embroidery, goes toward him and kisses him gently. He starts, looks up at her, and returns her caress.*)

RIB. My child!

MAR. Already you forget,
Oh, heedless father! Did you not promise me
To lay aside your brush to-day at noon,
And tell me the great secret?

RIB. Ah, 'tis true,
I am to blame. But it is morning yet;
My child, wait still a little.

MAR. 'Tis morning yet!
Nay, it was noon one mortal hour ago.
All patience I have sat till you should turn
And beckon me. The rosy angels breathe
Upon the canvas; I might sit till night,
And, if I spake not, you would never glance
From their celestial faces. Dear my father,
Your brow is moist, and yet your hands are ice;
Your very eyes are tired—pray, rest awhile.
The Spagnoletto need no longer toil
As in the streets of Rome for beggars' fare;
Now princes bide his pleasure.

RIB. (*throws aside his brush and palette*). Ah, Maria,
Thou speak'st in season. Let me ne'er forget
Those days of degradation, when I starved
Before the gates of palaces. The germs
Stirred then within me of the perfect fruits
Wherewith my hands have since enriched God's world.
Vengeance I vowed for every moment's sting—
Vengeance on wealth, rank, station, fortune, genius.

See, while I paint, all else escapes my sense,
 Save this bright throng of phantasies that press
 Upon my brain, each claiming from my hand
 Its immortality. But thou, my child,
 Remind'st me of mine oath, my sacred pride,
 The eternal hatred lodged within my breast.
 Philip of Spain shall wait. I will not deign
 To add to-day the final touch of life
 Unto this masterpiece.

MAR. So! that is well.
 Put by the envious brush that separates
 Father from daughter. Now you are all mine own,
 And now—your secret.

RIB. Mine? 'Tis none of mine;
 'Tis thine, Maria. John of Austria
 Desires our presence at his ball to-night.

MAR. Prince John?

RIB. Ay, girl, Prince John. I looked to see
 A haughty joy dance sparkling in thine eyes
 And burn upon thy cheek. But what is this?
 Timid and pale, thou droop'st thy head abashed
 As a poor flower-girl whom a lord accosts.

MAR. Forgive me. Sure, 'tis you Don John desires,
 The prince of artists—

RIB. Art! Prate not of art!
 Think'st thou I move an artist midst his guests?
 As such I commune with a loftier race;
 Angels and spirits are my ministers.
 These do I part aside to grace his halls;
 A Spanish gentleman—and so, his peer.

MAR. Father, I am not well; my head throbs fast,
 Unwonted languor weighs upon my frame.

RIB. Anger me not, Maria. 'Tis my will,
 Thou shalt obey. Hell, what these women be!
 No obstacle would daunt them in the quest
 Of that which, freely given, they reject.
 Hold! Haply just occasion bids thee seem
 Unlike thyself. Speak fearlessly, dear child;
 Confide to me thy knowledge, thy surmise.

MAR. (*hurriedly*). No, father, you were right. I have no
 cause;

Punish me—nay, forgive, and I obey.

RIB. There spake my child; kiss me and be forgiven.
 Sometimes I doubt thou playest upon my love
 Wilfully, knowing me as soft as clay,
 Whom the world knows of marble. In such moods,

I see my spirit mirror'd first, and then
From thy large eyes thy sainted mother's soul
Unclouded shine.

MAR. Can I be like to her ?
I only knew her faded, white and grave,
And so she still floats vaguely through my dreams,
With eyes like your own angels', and a brow
Worthy an aureole.

RIB. An earthly crown,
My princess, might more fitly rest on thine.
Annicca hath her colors, blue-black hair,
And pale, brown flesh, and gray, untroubled eyes;
Yet thou more often bring'st her to my mind,
For all the tawny gold of thy thick locks,
Thy rare white face, and brilliant Spanish orbs.
Thine is her lisping trick of voice, her laugh,
The blithest music still this side of heaven;
Thine her free, springing gait, though therewithal
A swaying, languid motion all thine own,
Recalls Valencia more than Italy.
Like and unlike thou art to her, as still
My memory loves to hold her, as she first
Beamed like the star of morning on my life.
Hot, faint, and footsore, I had paced since dawn
The sun-baked streets of Naples, seeking work,
Not alms, despite the beggar that I looked.
Now 'twas nigh vespers, and my suit had met
With curt refusal, sharp rebuff, and gibes.
Praised be the saints! for every drop of gall
In that day's brimming cup, I have upheld
A poisoned beaker to another's lips.
Many a one hath the Ribera taught
To fare a vagabond through alien streets;
A god unrecognized midst churls and clowns,
With kindled soul aflame, and body faint
For lack of bread. Domenichino knows,
And Gessi, Guido, Annibal Caracci—

MAR. Dear father, calm yourself. You had begun
To tell me how you saw my mother first.

RIB. True, I forgot it not. Why, I *am* calm;
The old man now can well be grave and cold,
Or laugh at his own youth's indignities,
Past a long lifetime back. 'Twas vespers' hour,
Or nigh it, when I reached her father's door.
Kind was his greeting, the first cordial words
I heard in Naples; but I took small heed

Of speech or tone, for all my sense was rapt
 In wonder at the angel by his side
 Who smiled upon me. Large, clear eyes that held
 The very soul of sunlight in their depths;
 Low, pure, pale brow, with masses of black hair
 Flung loosely back, and rippling unconfined
 In shadowy magnificence below
 The slim gold girdle o'er the snow-soft gown.
 Vested and draped in close-woven stuff of white,
 With gold about her throat and waist and wrists,
 A stately lily ere the dew of morn
 Hath passed away—such was thy mother, child.

MAR. Would I were like her! But what said she, father?
 How did she plead for you?

RIB. Ah, cunning child,
 I see thy tricks; thou humorest my age,
 Knowing how much I love to tell this tale,
 Though thou hast heard it half a hundred times.

MAR. I find it sweet to hear as you to tell,
 Believe me, father.

RIB. 'Twas to pleasure her,
 Signor Cortese gave me all I lacked
 To prove my unfamed skill. A savage pride,
 Matched oddly with my rags, the haughtiness
 Wherewith I claimed rather than begged my tools,
 And my quaint aspect, oft she told me since,
 Won at a glance her faith. Before I left,
 She guessed my need, and served me meat and wine
 With her own flower-white hands. The parting grace
 I craved was granted, that my work might be
 The portrait of herself. Thou knowest the rest.

MAR. Why did she leave us, father? Oh, how oft
 I yearn to see her face, to hear her voice,
 Hushed in an endless silence! Strange that she,
 Whose rich love beggared our return, should bear
 Such separation! Though engirdled now
 By heavenly hosts of saints and seraphim,
 I cannot fancy it. What! shall her child,
 Whose lightest sigh re-echoed in her heart,
 Have need of her and cry to her in vain?

RIB. Now, for God's sake, Maria, speak not thus;
 Let me not see such tears upon thy cheek.
 Not unto us it has been given to guess
 The peace of disembodied souls like her's.
 The vanishing glimpses that my fancies catch
 Through heaven's half-opened gates, exalt even me,

Poor sinner that I am. And what are these,
The painted shadows that make all my life
A glory, to the splendor of that light?
For thee, my child, has not my dotting love
Sufficed, at least in part, to fill the breach
Of that tremendous void? What dost thou lack?
What help, what counsel, what most dear caress?
What dost thou covet? What least whim remains
Ungratified, because not yet expressed?

MAR. None, none, dear father! Pardon me! Thy love,
Generous and wise as tender, shames my power
To merit or repay. Fie on my lips!
Look if they be not blistered. Let them smooth
With contrite kisses the last frown away.
We must be young to-night—no wrinkles then!
Genius must show immortal as she is.

RIB. Thou wilt unman me with thy pretty ways.
I had forgot the ball. Yea, I grow old;
This scanty morning's work has wearied me.
Once I had thought it play to dream all day
Before my canvas and then dance till dawn,
And now must I give o'er and rest at noon.

(Rises. Exit LUCA, ushering in LORENZO, who carries a
portfolio.)

LUCA. Signor Lorenzo. (LORENZO ceremoniously salutes RIBERA and MARIA.) [Exit LUCA.

LOR. Master, I bring my sketch. (Opens his portfolio and
hands a sketch to RIBERA.)

RIB. (after a pause). Humph! the design is not so ill-con-
ceived;

I note some progress; but your drawing's bad—
Yes, bad, sir. Mark you how this leg hangs limp,
As though devoid of life; these hands seem clenched,
Not loosely clasped, as you intended them.

(He takes his pencil and makes a few strokes.)

Thus should it stand—a single line will mend.

And here, what's this? Why, 'tis a sloven's work.

You dance too many nights away, young gallant.

You shirk close labor as do all your mates.

You think to win with service frivolous,

Snatched 'twixt your cups, or set between two kisses,

The favor of the mistress of the world.

LOR. Your pardon, master, but you do me wrong.

Mayhap I lack the gift. Alas, I fear it!

But not the patience, not the energy

Of earnest, indefatigable toil,

That help to make the artist.

RIB. 'S death! He dares
 Belie me, and deny the testimony
 Of his own handiwork, whose every line
 Betrays a sluggard soul, an indolent will,
 A brain that's bred to idleness. So be it!
 Master Lorenzo tells the Spagnoletto
 His own defects and qualities! 'Twere best
 He find another teacher competent
 To guide so apt, so diligent a scholar.

MAR. Dear father, what hath given thee offence?
 Cast but another glance upon the sketch;
 Surely it hath some grace, some charm, some promise.

RIB. Daughter, stand by! I know these insolent slips
 Of young nobility; they lack the stuff
 That makes us artists. What! to answer me!
 When next I drop a hint as to his colors,
 The lengthening or the shortening of a stroke,
 He'll bandy words with me about his error,
 To prove himself the master.

LOR. If my defect
 Be an hereditary grain i' the blood,
 Even as you say, I must abide by it;
 But if patrician habits more than birth
 Beget such faults, then may I dare to hope.
 Not mine, I knew, I felt, to clear new paths,
 To win new kingdoms; yet were I content
 With such achievement as a strenuous will,
 A firm endeavor, an unfaltering love,
 And an unwearying spirit might attain.
 Cast me not lightly back. Banish me not
 From this, my home of hope, of inspiration!

MAR. What, my ungentle father! will you hear,
 And leave this worthy signor's suit unanswered?

RIB. Well, he may bide. Sir, I will speak with you
 Anon upon this work. I judged in haste.
 Yea, it hath merit. I am weary now;
 To-morrow I shall be in fitter mood
 To give you certain hints.

(LORENZO bows his thanks and advances to address MARIA.)

RIBERA silences and dismisses him with a wave of the
 hand.) [Exit LORENZO.]

RIB. Should I o'ersleep
 Mine hour, Maria, thou must awaken me;
 But come what may, I will be fresh to-night,
 To triumph in thy triumph. [Exit RIBERA.]

MAR. (alone). Could I have told,
 Then when he bade me? Nay, what is to tell?

He had flouted me for prizing at such height
Homage so slight from John of Austria, even.
A glance exchanged, a smile, a fallen flower
Dropped from my hair, and pressed against his lips.
The Prince! my father gloats upon that name.
Were he no more than gentleman, I think
I should be glad. I cannot tell to-day
If I be sad or gay. Now could I weep
Warm, longing tears; anon, a fire of joy
Leaps in my heart and dances through my veins.
Why should I nurse such idle thoughts? To-night
We are to meet again. Will he remember?—
Nay, how should he forget? His heart is young;
His eyes do mirror loyalty. Oh, day!
Quicken thy dull, slow round of tedious hours!
God make me beautiful this happy night!
My father's sleeping saint rebukes my thought.
Strange he has left his work, against his wont,
Revealed before completed. I will draw
The curtain. (*She stands irresolute before the picture, with
her hand on the curtain.*)

Beautiful, oh, beautiful!
The far, bright, opened heavens—the dark earth,
Where the tranced pilgrim lies, with eyelids sealed,
His calm face flushed with comfortable sleep,
His weary limbs relaxed, his heavy head
Pillowed upon the stone. Oh, blessed dream
That visits his rapt sense, of airy forms,
Mounting, descending on the shining ladder,
With messages of peace. I will be true
Unto my lineage divine, and breathe
The passion of just pride that overfills
His soul inspired. (*While she stands before the canvas,
re-enter, unperceived by her, LORENZO.*)

LOR. Oh, celestial vision!
What brush may reproduce those magic tints,
Those lines ethereal?—

MAR. (*turns suddenly*). Is it not marvellous,
Signor Lorenzo? I would draw the curtain.
But, gazing, I forgot.

You are the first,
After the master and myself, to look
Upon this wonder.

LOR. (*With enthusiasm, looking for the first time at the picture*).
Ah, what an answer this
For envious minds that would restrict his power

To writhing limbs and shrivelled flesh! Repose,
Beauty, and large simplicity are here.
Yes, that is art! Before such work I stand
And feel myself a dwarf.

MAR. There, you are wrong.
My father even, who knows his proper worth,
Before his best achievements I have seen
In like dejection; 'tis the curse of genius.
Oft have I heard the master grace your name
With flattering addition.

LOR. 'Tis your goodness,
And not the echo of his praise, that speaks.
My work was worthless—'twas your generous voice
Alone secured the master's second glance.

MAR. Nay, signor, frankly, he esteems your talent.
Because you are of well-assured means
And gentle birth, he will be rude with you.
Not without base is the deep grudge he owes
To riches and prosperity.

LOR. Signora,
Why do I bear such harsh, injurious terms
As he affronts me with? Why must I seem
In mine own eyes a craven? Spiritless,
Dishonorably patient? 'Tis not his fame,
His power, his gift, his venerable years
That bind me here his willing slave. Maria,
'Tis thou, 'tis thou alone! 'Tis that I love thee,
And exile hence is death! (*A pause. He kneels at her
feet. She looks at him kindly, but makes no reply.*)

At thy dear feet

I lay my life with its most loyal service,
The subject of thy pleasure.

MAR. (*tenderly*). You are too humble.

LOR. Too humble! Do you seek mine utter ruin,
With words whose very tone is a caress?
I will say all. I love you!—you have known it.
Why should I tell you? Yet, to-day you seem
Other than you have been. A milder light
Beams from your eyes—a gentler grace is throned
Upon your brow—your words fall soft as dew
To melt my fixed resolve.

MAR. You find me, signor,
In an unguarded mood. I would be true
To you; and to myself; yet, know no answer.
Anon, I will be calm; pray you withdraw.

LOR. Till when? Remember what mad hopes and fears
Meantime will riot in my brain.

MAR. To-morrow—

Farewell, farewell.

LOR. (*kisses her hand*). Farewell.

[*Exit.*

MAR. A faithful heart,
A name untainted, a fair home—yea, these
Are what I need. Oh, lily soul in heaven,
Who wast on earth my mother, guide thy child!
(*While MARIA sits rapt in thought, enter from behind her,*
ANNICCA, who bends over her and kisses her brow.)

ANN. What, sister! lost in dreams by daylight? Fie!
Who is the monarch of thy thoughts?

MAR. (*starting*). Annicca!
My thoughts are bounden to no master yet;
They fly from earth to heaven in a breath.
Now are they all of earth. Hast heard the tidings?
ANN. Yea—of the prince's ball? We go together.
Braid in thy hair our mother's pearls, and wear
The amulet ingenmed with eastern stones;
'Twill bring good fortune.

MAR. Tell me, ere we go,
What manner of man is John of Austria?

ANN. Scarce man at all—a madcap, charming boy;
Well-favored—you have seen him—exquisite
In courtly compliment, of simple manners;
You may not hear a merrier laugh than his
From any boatman on the bay; well-versed
In all such arts as most become his station;
Light in the dance as winged-foot Mercury,
Eloquent on the zither, and a master
Of rapier and—

MAR. A puppet could be made
To answer in all points your praise of him.
Hath he no substance of a man?

ANN. Why, sister,
What may that be to us?

MAR. He is our Prince.

ANN. The promise of his youth is to outstrip
The hero of Lepanto; bright and bold
As fire, he is the very soul, the star
Of Spanish chivalry; his last achievement
Seems still the flower of his accomplishments.
Musician, soldier, courtier, yea, and artist.
“He had been a painter, were he not a prince,”
Says Messer Zurbaran. The Calderona,
His actress-mother, hath bequeathed to him
Her spirit with her beauty, and the power
To win and hold men's hearts.

MAR. I knew it, sister!
His eye hath a command in it; his brow
Seems garlanded with laurel.

ANN. What is this?
You kindle with his praise, your whole heart glows
In light and color on your face, your words
Take wing and fly as bold as reckless birds.
What! can so rash a thought, a dream so wild,
So hopeless an ambition, tempt your soul?

MAR. Pray you, what thought, what dream, and what ambition?

I knew not I had uttered any such.

ANN. Nor have you in your speech; your eyes now veiled,
Where the light leaped to hear me voice his fame,
Your blushes and your pallor have betrayed
That which should lie uncounted fathom deep—
The secret of a woman's foolish heart.

MAR. And there it lies, my sibyl sister, still!
Your plummet hath not reached it. Yes, 'tis love
Flaunts his triumphant colors in my cheek,
And quickens my lame speech—but not for him,
Not for the Prince—so may I vaunt his worth
With a free soul.

ANN. Say on.

MAR. A gentleman,
Favored of earth and heaven, true and loving,
Hath cast his heart at my imperial feet;
And if to-morrow find me as to-day,
I will e'en stoop and raise it to mine own.

ANN. Signor Vitruvio?

MAR. Not he, indeed!
Did not I say favored of earth and heaven?
That should mean other gifts than bags of gold,
Or a straight-featured mask. Nor will it be
Any you name, though you should name him right.
Must it not lie—how many fathom deep—
The secret of a woman's foolish heart?

ANN. Kiss me, Maria. You are still a child.
You cannot vex me, wilful as you be.
Your choice, I fear not, doubtless 'twill prove wise,
Despite your wild wit, for your heart is pure,
And you will pause with sure deliberate judgment
Before you leave our father.

MAR. Does love steal
So gently o'er our soul? What if he come,
A cloud, a fire, a whirlwind, to o'erbear
The feeble barriers wherewith we oppose him,

And blind our eyes and wrest from us our reason ?
Fear not, Annicca, for in no such guise
He visits my calm breast ; but yet you speak
Somewhat too sagely. Did such cautious wisdom
Guide your own fancy ?

ANN. Jest no more, Maria.
Since I became a wife, is much made clear,
Which a brief year ago was dark and vague.
Tommaso loves me—we are happier
Than I had dreamed ; yet matching now with then,
I see his love is not that large, rich passion
Our father bore us.

MAR. You regret your home ?

ANN. No, no ! I have no wish and no regret.
I speak for you. His is a sovereign soul,
And all his passions loom in huger shape
Than lesser men's. He brooks no rivalry
With his own offspring, and toward me his love
Hath ebb'd, I mark, to a more even flow,
While deeper, stronger, sets the powerful current
Toward you alone. Consider this, Maria,
Nor wantonly discrown that sacred head
Of your young love to wreath some curled boy's brow.

MAR. Think you his wish were that I should not wed ?

ANN. Nay, that I say not, for his pride aspires
To see you nobly mated.

MAR. (*after a pause*). Him will I wed
Whose name is ancient, fair, and honorable,
As the Ribera's is illustrious—
Him who no less than I will venerate
That white, divine old head. In art his pupil,
In love his son ; tender as I to watch,
And to delay the slow extinguishing
Of that great light.

ANN. There spake his darling child !

MAR. What is't o'clock ? If he should sleep too late—
He bade me rouse him—

ANN. Haste to seek him, then.
'Tis hard on sunset, and he looks for thee
With his first waking motion. Till to-night.—

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE IV.—*A Hall in RIBERA's house. Enter LUCA and FIAMETTA.*

FIA. But did you see her ?

LUCA. Nay, I saw her sister, Donna Annicca.

FIA. Tush, man ! never name her beside my lady Maria-
Rosa. You have lost the richest feast in the world for

hungry eyes. Her gown of cloth o' silver clad her, as it were, with light; there twinkled about her waist a girdle stiff with stones—you would have said they breathed. Mine own hands wreathed the dropping pearls in her hair, and pearls again were clasped around her throat. But no, I might tell thee every ornament—her jeweled fan, her comb of pearls, her floating veil of gauze, and still the best of all would escape us.

LUCA. Thou speakest more like her page than her hand-maiden.

FIA. Thou knowest not woman truly, for all thy wit. I speak most like a woman when I weigh the worth of beauty and rich apparel. Heigh-ho! I have felt the need of this. Thou, good Luca, who might have been my father, canst understand me? *He* was as poor as thou. Why shouldst thou be his lackey, his slave? My hand were as dainty as her's, if it could but be spared its daily labor.

LUCA. Yes, poor child, I understand thee, and yet thou art wrong. He is more slave to pride than I am to him. I know him well, Fiametta, after so many years of service, and to-day I pity him more than I fear him. Why, girl, my task is sport beside his toil! If my limbs be weary, I sleep; but I have seen him sit before his canvas with straining eyes and the big beads standing on his brow. When at last he gave o'er, and I have smoothed his pillow, and served and soothed him, what sleep could he snatch? His brain is haunted with evil visions, whereof some be merely of his own imagining, and others the phantoms of folk who are living or have lived, and who rouse his jealousy or mayhap his remorse, God only knows! If that be genius—to be alive to pain at every pore, to be possessed of a devil that robs you of your sleep and grants no space between the hours of grinding toil—I thank the saints I am a simple man!

FIA. I grant thee thou mayst be right concerning him; he hath indeed a strange, sour mien. I shudder when he turns suddenly, as his wont is, and bends his evil eyes on me. The holy father tells me such warnings come from God. No matter how slight the service he asks of me, my flesh creeps and my limbs refuse to move, till I have whispered an Ave. But what of Lady Maria-Rosa. Both heaven and earth smile upon her. To-night she wears a poor girl's dowry, a separate fortune, on her head, her neck, her hands, yes, on her little jeweled feet. One tiny shoe of hers would make me free to wed my lad.

LUCA. If he have but eyes, I warrant thee he finds jewels enough in thy bright face. Tell me his name.

FIA. Nay, that is my secret.

LUCA. He must be a poor-souled lad if he will wait till thou hast earned a dowry.

FIA. A poor-souled lad! my good Vincenzo—ah! but no matter; thou knowest him, Luca, my Lord Lorenzo's page. There!—is he poor, or mean, or plain, or dull? He claims no dowry, he—but I have my pride, as well as great ones.

LUCA. May the saints preserve thee from such as theirs! I am heartily glad of thy good fortune. I am not sure whether thou or Lady Maria-Rosa be the most favored. Well, the end proves all. *[Exeunt.]*

Enter on one side ANNICCA and DON TOMMASO, attired for the ball; on the other side, RIBERA.

RIB. What do ye here, my children? Haste away! Maria waits you for the ball; folk say 'Twill be the the bravest show e'er seen in Naples. I warrant you the Spagnoletto brings The richest jewels—what say'st thou, my son?

DON TOM. I who have robbed you of one gem, need scarce Re-word, sir, how I prize it.

RIB. Why, 'tis true.

Robbed me, thou sayst? So hast thou. She was mine—The balanced beauty of her flesh and spirit, That was my garland, and I was her all, Till thou, a stranger, stole her heart's allegiance, Suborned— Forgive me, I am old, a father, Whose doting passions blind. I am not jealous, Believe me, sir. When we Riberas give, We give without retraction or reserve, Were it our life-blood. I rejoice with thee That she is thine; nor am I quite bereft, I have some treasure still. I do repent So heartily of my discourteous speech, That I will crave your leave before I kiss Your wife's soft palm.

ANN. *(kissing him repeatedly)*. Why, father, what is this? Can Don Tommaso's wife so soon forget She is the Spagnoletto's child?

RIB. Enough.

I can bear praise, thou knowest, from all save thee And my Maria. My grave son, I fear, Will mock these transports. Pray go in with me. No one of us but has this night a triumph. Let us make ready. *[Exeunt.]*

A C T I I.

SCENE I.—*Ball in the Palace of DON JOHN. Dance. DON JOHN and MARIA together. DON TOMMASO, ANNICCA, LORDS and LADIES, dancing or promenading.*

1ST LORD. Were it not better to withdraw awhile,
After our dance, unto the torch-lit gardens?
The air is fresh and sweet without.

1ST LADY. Nay, signor,
I like this heavy air, rich with warm odors,
The broad, clear light, the many-colored throng.
I might have breathed on mine own balcony
The evening breeze.

1ST LORD. Still at cross purposes.
When will you cease to flout me?

1ST LADY. When I prize
A lover's sigh more dear than mine own pleasure.
See, the Signora Julia passed again.
She is far too pale for so much white, I find.
Donna Aurora—ah, how beautiful!
That spreading ruff, sprinkled with seeds of gold,
Becomes her well. Would you believe it, sir,
Folk say her face is twin to mine—what think you?

1ST LORD. For me, the huge earth holds but one such face.
You know it well.

1ST LADY. The hall is over-filled;
Go we without. *(They pass on.)*

2D LADY. Thrice he hath danced with her.
She is not one of us—her face is strange;
Colored and carven to meet most men's desire—
Is't not, my lord? Certes, it loses naught
For lack of ornament. Pray, ask her name,
If but for my sake.

2D LORD. I have already asked.
She is the daughter to the Spagnoletto,
Maria-Rosa.

2D LADY. Ah, I might have guessed.
The form and face are matched with the apparel,
As in a picture. 'Twas the master's hand,
I warrant you, arranged with such quaint art,
Such seeming-careless care, the dead, white pearls
Within her odd, bright hair. *(They pass on.)*

DON JOHN. Now hope, now fear
Reigned lord of my wild dreams. One name still sang
Like the repeated strain of some caged bird,

It's sweet, persistent music through my brain.
One vanishing face upon the empty air
Shone forth and faded night and day. And you,
Did you not find me hasty, over-bold ?
Nay, tell me all your thought.

MAR. You know, my lord,
I am no courtier, and belike my thought
Might prove too rustic for a royal ear.

DON JOHN. Speak on, speak on;
Though you should rail, your voice would still outsing
Rebeck and mandoline.

MAR. Is it not strange ?
I knew you not, albeit I might have guessed,
If only from the simple garb of black,
And golden collar, midst the motley hues
Of our gay nobles. I know not what besides,
But this first won me. Be not angered, sir;
But, as I looked, I never ranked you higher
Than simple gentleman. I asked your name,
Then, when your Highness stooped to pick my flower,
My lord, that moment was my thought a traitor,
For it had fain discrowned you.

DON JOHN. May God's angels
Reward such treason. Say me those words again.
Let the rich blush born of that dear confession
Again dye cheek and brow, and fade and melt
Forever, even as then.

MAR. We are watched, my lord.
This is no place, no hour, for words like these.

DON JOHN. When, where, then, may we meet ?
(*They pass on.*)

SCENE II.—*The Palace Gardens. Interrupted sounds of music and revelry come through the open windows of the ball-room, seen in the background. RIBERA, pacing the stage, occasionally pausing to look in upon the dancers.*

RIB. This is revenge. Is she not beautiful,
Ye gods ? The beggar's child matched with a prince !
Throb not so high, my heart, 'neath envious eyes
Fixed on thy triumph ! Now am I well repaid
For my slow, martyred years. Was I not wrung
By keener tortures than my savage brush,
Though dipped in my heart's blood, might reproduce !
No twisted muscle, no contorted limb,
No agony of flesh, have I yet drawn,

That owed not its suggestion to some pang
 Of my pride crucified, my spirit racked,
 My entrails gnawed by the blind worm of hate,
 Engendered of oppression. That is past,
 But not forgotten; though to-night I please
 To yield to gentler influence, to own
 The strength of beauty and the power of joy,
 And welcome gracious phantasies that throng
 And hover over me in airy shapes.
 The spirits of earth and heaven contend to-night
 For mastery within me; ne'er before
 Have I been more the seer to whom God opes
 His cherub-guarded portals; ne'er before
 Have I been more the Spagnoletto, fired
 With noble wrath, with the consuming fever
 And fierce delight of vengeance.

From this point

I see her clearly—the auroral face
 A-light with smiles, the imperial head upraised;
 Her languid hand sways the broad, silken fan,
 Whose wing-like movement stirs above her brow
 The fine, bright curls, as though warm airs of heaven
 Around her breathed. He leads her midst the throng.
 So, they have gone; but I will follow them,
 And watch them from afar.

[*Exit.*

Enter from the opposite side DON JOHN and MARIA.

DON JOHN. I dread to ask
 What quivers on my lips. My heart is free,
 But thine?

MAR. My heart is free, my lord.

DON JOHN. Thank God!

MAR. It never beat less calmly at the sound
 Of any voice till now. I laugh to think
 This very morn I fancied it had met
 Its master.

DON JOHN. Ah!

MAR. Fear naught—a simple boy,
 A pupil of my father's.

DON JOHN. I was mad
 To dream it could be otherwise. Forgive me;
 I, a mere stranger in thy life, am jealous
 Of all thy present and thy past.

MAR. Listen, my lord;
 You shall hear all. What hour, think you, he chose
 To urge his cause? The same wherein I learned
 Your Highness had commanded for to-night
 Our presence. My winged thoughts were flying back

To Count Lodovico's; again I saw you,
My white rose at your lips, your grave eyes fixed
Most frankly, yet most reverently, on mine.
Again my heart sank as I heard the name,
The Prince of Austria; and while I mused,
He spake of love. Oh, I am much to blame!
My mood was soft—although I promised naught,
I listened, yea, I listened. Good, my lord,
Do you not pity him?

DON JOHN. Thanks, and thanks again,
For thy confession! Now no spot remains
On the unblemished mirror of my faith.
Since that dear night, I with one only thought
Have gained the sum of knowledge and opinions
Touching thine honored father, with such scraps
As the gross public voice could dole to me
Concerning thine own far-removed, white life.
Thou art, I learn, immured in close seclusion;
Thy father, be it with all reverence said,
Hedges with jealous barriers his treasure;
Whilst thou, most duteous, tenderest of daughters,
Breath'st but for him.

MAR. Dear father! were it so,
'Twere simple justice. Ah, if you but knew him—
A proud, large, tameless heart. This is the cloister
Where he immures me—Naples' gayest revels;
The only bar wherewith he hedges me
Is his unbounded trust, that leaves me free.
Let us go in; the late night air is chill.

DON JOHN. Yet one more dance?

MAR. You may command, my lord.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter RIBERA.

RIB. I lost them in the press. Ah, there they dance
Again together. I would lay my hands
In blessing on that darling, haughty head.
Like the Ribera's child, she bears her honors
As lightly as a flower. Yet there glows
Unwonted lustre in her starry eyes,
And richer beauty blushes on her cheek.
Enough. Now must I strive to fix that form
That haunts my brain—the blind, old Count Camillo,
The Prince's oracle. Midst the thick throng
My fancy singled him; white beard, white hair,
Sealed eyes, and brow lit by an inward light.
So will I paint mine Isaac blessing Esau,
While Jacob kneels before him—blind, betrayed
By his own flesh!

As RIBERA stands aside, lost in thought, enter DON JOHN
and MARIA.

MAR. See, the impatient day
Wakes in the east.

DON JOHN. One moment here, signora,
Breathe we the charm of this enchanted night.
Look where behind yon vines the slow moon sets,
Hidden from us, while every leaf hangs black,
Each tender stalk distinct, each curling edge
Against the silver sky.

MAR. (*perceiving* RIBERA). What, father! here?

RIB. Maria!— Ah, my Prince, I crave your pardon.
When thus I muse, 'tis but my mind that lives;
Each outward sense is dead. I saw you not,
I heard nor voice nor footstep. Yonder lines
That streak the brightening east warn us away.
For all your grace to us, the Spagnoletto
Proffers his thanks to John of Austria.
My daughter, art thou ready?

DON JOHN. I am bound,
Illustrious signor, rather unto you
And the signora, past all hope of payment.
When may I come to tender my poor homage
To the Sicilian master?

RIB. My lord will jest.
Our house is too much honored when he deigns
O'erstep the threshold. Let your royal pleasure
Alone decide the hour.

DON JOHN. To-morrow, then.
Or I should say to-day, for dawn is nigh.

RIB. And still we trespass. Be it as you will;
We are your servants.

MAR. So, my lord, good-night.

[*Exeunt MARIA and RIBERA.*]

DON JOHN (*alone*). Gods, what a haughty devil rules that
man!

As though two equal princes interchanged
Imperial courtesies! The Spagnoletto
Thanks John of Austria! Louis of France
Might so salute my father. By heavens, I know not
What patience or what reverence withheld
My enchafed spirit in bounds of courtesy.
Nay, it was she, mine angel, whose mere aspect
Is balm and blessing. How her love-lit eyes
Burned through my soul! How her soft hand's slight
pressure
Tingled along my veins! Oh, she is worthy

A heart's religion! How shall I wear the hours
Ere I may seek her? Lo, I stand and dream,
While my late guests await me. Patience, patience!
[Exit.]

SCENE III.—*Morning twilight in Ribera's Garden. During this scene the day gradually breaks, and at the close the full light of morning illuminates the stage.* LORENZO.

LOR. (*sings*).

AUBADE.

From thy popped sleep awake;
From thy golden dreams arise;
Earth and seas new colors take,
Love-light dawns in rosy skies,
Weird night's fantastic shadows are outworn;
Why tarriest thou, oh, sister to the morn?

Harken, love! the matin choir
Of birds salutes thee, and with these
Blends the voice of my desire.
Unto no richer promises
Of deeper, dearer, holier love than mine,
Canst thou awaken from thy dreams divine.

Lo, thine eastern windows flame,
Brightening with the brightened sky;
Rise, and with thy beauty shame
Morning's regal pageantry,
To thrill and bless as the reviving sun,
For my heart gropes in doubt, though night be gone.

(*He speaks.*) Why should I fear? Her soul is pledged to
mine,
Albeit she still withheld the binding word.
How long hath been the night! but morn breathes
hope.

"*I fain were true to you and to myself*"—
Did she say thus? or is my fevered brain
The fool of its desires? The whole world swam;
The blood rang beating in mine ears and roared
Like rushing waters; yet, as through a dream,
I saw her dimly. Surely on her lids
Shone the clear tears. As there's a God in heaven,
She spake those words! My lips retain the touch
Of those soft, snow-cold hands, neither refused
Nor proffered. Such things *are*, nor can they be
Forgotten or foreknown. Yes, she is mine.
But soft! Her casement opes. Oh, joy, 'tis she!
Pale, in a cloud of white she stands and drinks
The morning sunlight.

MAR. (*above at the window*). Ah, how sweet this air
 Kisses my sleepless lids and burning temples.
 I am not weary, though I found no rest.
 My spirit leaps within me; a new glory
 Blesses the dear, familiar scene—ripe orchard,
 Garden and grove, and glimmering gulf beyond;
 The same—yet oh, how different! Even I thought
 Soft music trembled on the listening air,
 As though a harp were touched, blent with low song.
 Sure, that was phantasy. I will descend,
 Visit my flowers, and see whereon the dew
 Hangs heaviest, and what fairest bud hath bloomed
 Since yester-eve. Why should I court repose
 And dull forgetfulness, while the large earth
 Wakes to no lesser joy than mine? [*Exit from above.*]

LOR. Oh, heart!
 How may my breast contain thee, with thy burden
 Of too much happiness?

*Enter MARIA below; LORENZO springs forward to greet her;
 she shrinks back in a sort of terror.*

LOR. Good-day, sweet mistress.
 May the blithe spirit of this auspicious morn
 Become the genius of thy days to come,
 Whereof be none less beautiful than this.
 Why art thou silent? Does not love inspire
 Joyous expression, be it but a sigh,
 A song, a smile, a broken word, a cry?
 Thou hast not granted me the promised pledge
 For which I hunger still. I would confirm
 With dear avowals, frequent seals of love,
 That which, though sure, I yet can scarce believe.

MAR. Somewhat too sure, I think, my lord Lorenzo.
 I scarce deemed possible that one so shy
 But yester-morn should hold so high a mien,
 Claiming what ne'er was given.

LOR. Maria!

MAR. Sir,
 You are a trifle bold to speak my name
 Familiarly as no man, save my father
 Or my own brother, dares.

LOR. Ah, now I see
 Your jest. You will not seem so lightly won
 Without a wooing? You will feign disdain,
 Only to make more sweet your rich concession?
 Too late—I heard it all. "*A new light shines
 On the familiar scene.*" What may that be,
 Save the strange splendor of the dawn of love?

Nay, darling, cease to jest, lest my poor heart,
Hanging 'twixt hell and heaven, in earnest break.

MAR. Here is no jest, sir, but a fatal error,
Crying for swift correction. You surprise me
With rude impatience, ere I have found time
To con a gentle answer. Pardon me
If any phrase or word or glance of mine
Hath bred or nourished in your heart a hope
That you might win my love. It cannot be.

LOR. A word, a glance! Why, the whole frozen statue
Warmed into life. Surely it was not you.
You must have bribed some angel with false prayers
To wear your semblance—nay, no angel served,
But devilish witchcraft—

MAR. Sir, enough, enough!
I hoped to find here peace and solitude.
These lacking, I retire. Farewell.

(Going toward the house.)

LOR. Signora,
I will not rob you of your own. Farewell to you.

[Exit.]

MAR. Where have you flown, bright dreams? Has that
rude hand

Sufficed to dash to naught your frail creations?
Sad thoughts and humors black now fill my soul.
So his rough foot hath bruised the dewy grass,
And left it sere. Why should his harsh words touch me?
The truth of yesterday is false to-day.

How could I know, dear God! How might I guess
The bitter sweetness, the delicious pain!

A new heart fills my breast, as soft and weak
And melting as a tear, unto its lord;

But kindled with quick courage to endure,

If I need front for him, a world of foes.

If this be love, ah, what a hell is theirs

Who suffer without hope! Even I, who hold

So many dear assurances, who hear

Still ringing in mine ears such sacred vows,

Am haunted with an unaccustomed doubt,

Not wonted to go hand-in-hand with joy.

A gloomy omen greets me with the morn;

I, who recoil from pain, must strike and wound.

What may this mean? Help me, ye saints of heaven

And holy mother, for my strength is naught!

(She falls on her knees and bursts into tears. Re-enter LORENZO.)

LOR. *(aside)*. Thank heaven, I came. How have I wrung
her soul!

A noble love, forsooth! A blind, brute passion,
That being denied, is swift transformed to hate
No whit more cruel. (*To Maria*). Lady!

MAR. (*rising hastily*). Signor Lorenzo!
Again what would you with me?

LOR. No such suit
As late I proffered, but your gracious pardon.

MAR. Rise, sir, forgiven. I, too, have been to blame,
Although less deeply than you deemed. Forbear
To bind your life. I feel myself unworthy
Of that high station where your thoughts enthrone me.
Yet I dare call myself your friend.

(*Offering him her hand, which LORENZO presses to his lips.*)

LOR. Thanks, thanks!

Be blessed, and farewell.

[*Exit.*

(*Enter RIBERA, calling*). Daughter! Maria!

MAR. Why, father, I am here (*kissing him*). Good-day.
What will you?

RIB. Darling, no more than what I always will.
Before I enter mine own world removed,
I fain would greet the dearest work of God.
I missed you when I rose. I sought you first
In your own chamber, where the lattice, oped,
Let in the morning splendor and the smells
Of the moist garden, with the sound of voices.
I looked, I found you here—but not alone.
What man was that went from you?

MAR. Your disciple,
My lord Lorenzo. You remember, father,
How yester-morn I pleaded for his work;
Thus he, through gratitude and—love, hath watched
All night within our garden, while I danced;
And when I came to nurse my flowers—he spake.

RIB. And you?

MAR. Am I not still beside you, father?
I will not leave you.

RIB. Ah, mine angel-child!
I cannot choose but dread it, though I wait
Expectant of the hour when you fulfill
Your woman's destiny. You have full freedom;
Yet I rejoice at this reprieve, and thank thee
For thy brave truthfulness. Be ever thus,
Withholding naught from him whose heart reflects
Only thine image. Thou art still my pride,
Even as last night when all eyes gazed thy way,
Thy bearing equal in disdainful grace
To his who courted thee—thy sovereign's son.

MAR. Yea, so? And yet it was not pride I felt,
Nor consciousness of self, nor vain delight
In the world's envy—something more than these,
Far deeper, sweeter— What have I said? My brain
Is dull with sleep. 'Tis only now I feel
The weariness of so much pleasure.

RIB. (*rising*). Well,
Go we within. Yes, I am late to work;
We squander precious moments. Thou, go rest,
And waken with fresh roses in thy cheeks,
To greet our royal guest. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Studio of the Spagnoletto.* RIBERA before his
canvas. LUCA in attendance.

RIB. (*laying aside his brush.*) So! I am weary. Luca,
what's o'clock?

LUCA. My lord, an hour past noon.

RIB. So late already!
Well, one more morning of such delicate toil
Will make it ready for Madrid, and worthy
Not merely Philip's eyes, but theirs whose glance
Outvalues a king's gaze, my noble friend
Velasquez, and the monkish Zurbaran.
Luca!

LUCA. My lord.

RIB. Hath the signora risen?

LUCA. Fiametta passed a brief while since, and left
My lady sleeping.

RIB. Good! she hath found rest;
Poor child, she sadly lacked it. She had known
'Twixt dawn and dawn no respite from emotion;
Her chill hand fluttered like a bird in mine;
Her soft brow burned my lips. Could that boy read
The tokens of an overwearied spirit,
Strained past endurance, he had spared her still,
At any cost of silence. What is such love
To mine, that would outrival Roman heroes—
Watch mine arm crisp and shrivel in quick flame,
Or set a lynx to gnaw my heart away,
To save her from a needle-prick of pain,
Ay, or to please her? At their worth she rates
Her wooers—light as all embracing air
Or universal sunshine. Luca, go

And tell Fiametta—rather, bid the lass
Hither herself.

[*Exit* LUCA.]

He comes to pay me homage,
As would his royal father, if he pleased
To visit Naples; yet she too shall see him.
She is part of all I think, of all I am;
She is myself, no less than yon bright dream
Fixed in immortal beauty on the canvas.

Enter FIAMETTA.

FIA. My lord, you called me?

RIB. When thy mistress wakes,
Array her richly, that she be prepared
To come before the Prince.

FIA. Sir, she hath risen,
And only waits me with your lordship's leave,
To cross the street unto St. Francis' church.

RIB. (*musingly*). With such slight escort? Nay, this troubles me.

Only the Strada's width? The saints forbid
That I should thwart her holy exercise!
Myself will go. I cannot. Bid her muffle,
Like our Valencian ladies, her silk mantle
About her face and head.

(*At a sign from RIBERA, exit FIAMETTA.*)

Yes, God will bless her.

What should I fear? I will make sure her beauty
Is duly masked. (*He goes toward the casement.*)

Ay, there she goes—the mantle,
Draped round the stately head, discloses naught
Save the live jewel of the eye. Unless one guessed
From the majestic grace and proud proportions,
She might so pass through the high thoroughfares.
Ah, one thick curl escapes from its black prison.
Alone in Naples, wreathed with rays of gold,
Her crown of light betrays her. So, she's safe!

Enter LUCA.

LUCA. A noble gentleman of Spain awaits
The master's leave to enter.

RIB. Show him in.

(*Exit* LUCA. RIBERA draws the curtain before his picture of "Jacob's Dream.")

RIB. A gentleman of Spain! Perchance the Prince
Sends couriers to herald his approach,
Or craves a longer grace.

Enter LUCA, ushering in DON JOHN unattended, completely enveloped in a Spanish mantle, which he throws off, his face almost hidden by a cavalier's hat. He uncovers his head on entering. RIBERA, repressing a movement of surprise, hastens to greet him and kisses his hand.

RIB. Welcome, my lord!

I am shamed to think my sovereign's son should wait,
Through a churl's ignorance, without my doors.

DON JOHN. Dear master, blame him not. I came attended
By one page only. Here I blush to claim
Such honor as depends on outward pomp.
No royalty is here, save the crowned monarch
Of our Sicilian artists. Be it mine
To press with reverent lips my master's hand.

RIB. Your Highness is too gracious; if you glance
Round mine ill-furnished studio, my works
Shall best proclaim me and my poor deserts.
Luca, uplift yon hangings.

DON JOHN (*seating himself*). Sir, you may sit.

RIB. (*aside, seating himself slowly*). Curse his swollen arrogance! Doth he imagine

I waited leave of him? (*LUCA uncovers the picture.*)

DON JOHN. Oh, wonderful!

You have bettered here your best. Why, sir, he
breathes!

Will not those locked lids ope?—that nerveless hand
Regain the iron strength of sinew mated
With such heroic frame? You have conspired
With Nature to produce a man. Behold,
I chatter foolish speech; for such a marvel
The fittest praise is silence.

(*He rises and stands before the picture.*)

RIB. (*after a pause*). I am glad

Your Highness deigns approve. Lose no more time,
Lest the poor details should repay you not.
Unto your royal home 'twill follow you,
Companion, though unworthy, to the treasures
Of the Queen's gallery.

DON JOHN. 'Tis another jewel

Set in my father's crown, and, in his name,
I thank you for it.

(*RIBERA bows silently. DON JOHN glances around the studio.*)

DON JOHN. There hangs a quaint, strong head,
Though merely sketched. What a marked, cunning leer
Grins on the wide mouth! what a bestial glance!

RIB. 'Tis but a slight hint for my larger work,
"Bacchus made drunk by Satyrs."

DON JOHN. Where is that?
I ne'er have seen the painting.

RIB. 'Tis not in oils,
But etched in aqua-fortis, and the plate
Is still in my possession. Luca, fetch down
Yonder portfolio. I can show your Highness
The graven copy.

(LUCA brings forward a large portfolio. RIBERA looks
hastily over the engravings and draws one out, which he
shows DON JOHN.)

DON JOHN. Ah, most admirable!
I know not who is best portrayed—the god,
Plump, reeling, wreathed with vine, in whom abides
Something Olympian still, or the coarse Satyrs,
Thoroughly brutish. Here I scarcely miss,
So masterly the grouping, so distinct
The bacchanalian spirit, your rich brush,
So vigorous in color. Do you find
The pleasure in this treatment equals that
Of the oil painting?

RIB. All is in my mood;
We have so many petty talents, clever
To mimic Nature's surface. I name not
The servile copyists of the greater masters,
Or of th' archangels, Raphael and Michael;
But such as paint our cheap and daily marvels.
Sometimes I fear lest they degrade our art
To a nice craft for plodding artisans—
Mere realism, which they mistake for truth.
My soul rejects such limits. The true artist
Gives Nature's best effects with far less means.
Plain black and white suffice him to express
A finer grace, a stronger energy
Than she attains with all the aid of color.
I argue thus and work with simple tools,
Like the Greek fathers of our art—the sculptors,
Who wrought in white alone their matchless types.
Then dazzled by the living bloom of earth,
Glowing with color, I return to that,
My earliest worship, and compose such work
As you see there. (*Pointing to the picture.*)

DON JOHN. Would it be overmuch,
In my brief stay in Naples, to beg of you
A portrait of myself in aqua-fortis?
'Twould rob you, sir, of fewer golden hours
Than the full-colored canvas, and enrich
With a new treasure our royal gallery.

RIB. You may command my hours and all that's mine.

DON JOHN (*rising*). Thanks, generous master. When may I return

For the first sitting?

RIB. I am ready now—

To-day, to-morrow—when your Highness please.

DON JOHN. 'Twould be abuse of goodness to accept

The present moment. I will come to-morrow,

At the same hour, in some more fitting garb.

Your hand, sir, and farewell. Salute for me,

I pray you, the signora. May I not hope

To see and thank her for her grace to me,

In so adorning my poor feast?

RIB. The debt is ours.

She may be here to-morrow—she is free,

She only, while I work, to come and go.

Pray, sir, allow her—she is never crossed.

I stoop to beg for her—she is the last

Who bides with me— I crave your pardon, sir;

What should this be to you?

DON JOHN. 'Tis much to me,

Whose privilege has been in this rare hour,

Beneath the master to discern the man,

And thus add friendship unto admiration.

(*He presses RIBERA's hand and is about to pick up his mantle and hat. LUCA springs forward, and, while he is throwing the cloak around the Prince's shoulders, enter hastily MARIA, enveloped in her mantilla, as she went to church.*)

MAR. Well, father, am I veiled and swathed to suit you,

To cross the Strada?

(*She throws off her mantilla and appears all in white.*

She goes to embrace her father, when she suddenly perceives the Prince, and stands speechless and blushing.)

RIB. Child, his Royal Highness

Prince John of Austria.

DON JOHN. Good-day, signora.

Already twice my gracious stars have smiled.

I saw you in the street. You wore your mantle,

As the noon sun might wear a veil of cloud,

Covering, but not concealing.

MAR. I, sir, twice

Have unaware stood in your royal presence.

You are welcome to my father's home and mine.

I scarce need crave your pardon for my entrance;

Yourself must see how well assured I felt

My father was alone.

DON JOHN. And so you hoped
To find him—shall I read your answer thus?

RIB. Nay, press her not. Your Highness does her wrong,
So harshly to construe her simpleness.
My daughter and myself are one, and both
Will own an equal pleasure if you bide.

DON JOHN (*seating himself*). You chain me with kind words.

MAR. My father, sir,
Hath surely told you our delight and marvel
At the enchantments of your feast. For me
The night was brief, rich, beautiful, and strange
As a bright dream.

DON JOHN. I will gainsay you not.
A beauteous soul can shed her proper glory
On mean surroundings. I have likewise dreamed,
Nor am I yet awake. This morn hath been
A feast for mind and eye. Yon shepherd-prince,
Whom angels visit in his sleep, shall crown
Your father's brow with a still fresher laurel,
And link in equal fame the Spanish artist
With the Lord's chosen prophet.

RIB. That may be,
For in the form of that worn wayfarer
I drew myself. So have I slept beneath
The naked heavens, pillowed by a stone,
With no more shelter than the wind-stirred branches,
While the thick dews of our Valencian nights
Drenched my rude weeds, and chilled through blood
and bone.
Yet to me also were the heavens revealed,
And angels visited my dreams.

DON JOHN. How strange
That you, dear master, standing on the crown
Of a long life's continuous ascent,
Should backward glance unto such dark beginnings.

RIB. Obscure are all beginnings. Yet I muse
With pleasing pain on those fierce years of struggle.
They were to me my birthright; all the vigor,
The burning passion, the unflinching truth,
My later pencil gained, I gleaned from them.
I prized them. I reclaimed their ragged freedom,
Rather than hold my seat, a liveried slave,
At the rich board of my Lord Cardinal.
A palace was a prison till I reared
Mine own. But now my child's heart I would pierce
Sooner than see it bear the least of ills,
Such as I then endured.

DON JOHN.

Donna Maria

May smile, sir, at your threat; she is in a pleasance,
Where no rude breezes blow, no shadow falls
Darker than that of cool and fragrant leaves.
Yea, were it otherwise — had you not reaped
The fruit of your own works, she had not suffered.
Your children are Spain's children.

RIB.

Sir, that word

Is the most grateful you have spoken yet.
Why art thou silent, daughter?

MAR. (*absently*). What should I say?

The Prince is kind. I scarcely heard your words.
I listened to your voices, and I mused.

DON JOHN (*rising*). I overstep your patience.

MAR. You will be gone?

What have I said?

RIB.

You are a child, Maria.

To-morrow I will wait your Highness.

DON JOHN.

Thanks.

To-morrow noon. Farewell. Farewell, signora.

[*Exit DON JOHN.*]

RIB. What ails you, daughter? You forget yourself.

Your tongue cleaves to your mouth. You sit and muse,
A statue of white silence. Twice to-day
You have deeply vexed me. Go not thus again
Across the street with that light child, Fiametta.
Faith, you were closely muffled. What was this—
This tell-tale auburn curl that rippled down
Over the black mantilla? Were I harsh,
Suspicious, jealous, fearful, prone to wrath,
Or any thing of all that I am not,
I should have deemed it no mere negligence,
But a bold token.

MAR.

Father, you make me quail.

Why do you threat me with such evil eyes?

Would they could read my heart!

RIB.

Elude me not.

Whom have you met beside the Prince this morn?

Who saw you pass? Whom have you spoken with?

MAR. For God's sake, father, what strange thoughts are
these?

With none, with none! Beside the Prince, you say?

Why even him I saw not, as you know.

I hastened with veiled eyes cast on the ground,
Swathed in my mantle still, I told my beads,
And in like manner hasted home to you.

RIB. Well, it may pass; but henceforth say thy matins
In thine own room. I know not what vague cloud
Obscures my sight and weighs upon my brain.
I am very weary. Luca, follow me.

[*Exeunt RIBERA and LUCA.*]

MAR. Poor father! Dimly he perceives some trouble
Within the threatening air. Thank heaven, I calmed
him,

Yet I spake truth. What could have roused so soon
His quick suspicion? Did Fiametta see
The wary page slip in my hand the missive,
As we came forth again? Nay, even so,
My father hath not spoken with her since.
Sure he knows naught; 'tis but my foolish fear
Makes monsters out of shadows. I may read
The priceless lines and grave them on my heart.
(*She draws from her bosom a letter, reads it, and presses it to
her lips.*)

He loves me, yes, he loves me! Oh, my God,
This awful joy in mine own breast is love!
To-night he will await me in our garden.
Oh, for a word, a pressure of the hand!
I fly, my Prince, at thy most dear behest! [Exit.

SCENE II.—*A room in DON TOMMASO's house. DON TOMMASO's
and ANNICCA.*

DON TOM. Truly, you wrong your sister; she is young,
Heedless, and wilful, that is all; a touch
Of the Ribera's spirit fired the lass.
Don John was but her weapon of revenge
Against the malice of our haughty matrons,
Who hurled their icy shafts of scorn from heights
Of dignity, upon the artist's daughter.

ANN. I cannot think with you. In her demeanor,
Her kindled cheek, her melting eye, was more
Than sly revenge or cautious policy.
If that was art, it overreached itself.
Ere the night ended, I had blushed to see
Slighting regards cast on my father's child,
And hear her name and his tossed lightly round.

DON TOM. Could you not read in such disparagement
The envy of small natures?

ANN. I had as lief
Maria were to dance the tarantella
Upon the quay at noonday, as to see her
Gazed at again with such insulting homage.

DON TOM. You are too strict ; your baseless apprehensions
Wrong her far more than strangers' jests.

ANN. Not so ;
My timely fears prevent a greater ill
And work no harm, since they shall be imparted
Only to him who hath the power to quell them,
Dissolving them to air—my father.

DON TOM. How !
You surely will not rouse his fatal wrath ?
Annicca, listen : if your doubts were true,
He whose fierce love guards her with sleepless eyes,
More like the passion of some wild, dumb creature,
With prowling jealousy and deadly spring,
Forth leaping at the first approach of ill,
Than the calm tenderness of human fathers ;
He surely had been keen to scent the danger.
I saw him at the ball—as is his wont ;
He mingled not among the revellers,
But like her shadow played the spy on her.

ANN. A word would stir less deeply than you dread.

DON TOM. Ah, there you err ; he knows no middle term.
At once he would accept as fact the worst
Of your imaginings ; his rage would smite
All near him, and rebound upon himself ;
For, as I learn, Don John brings royal orders
For the Queen's gallery ; he would dismiss
The Prince as roughly as a begging artist.
Make no such breach just now betwixt the court
And our own kindred.

ANN. Be it so, Tommaso.
I will do naught in haste.

DON TOM. Watch thou and wait.
A slight reproof might now suffice the child,
Tame as a bird unto a gentle voice.

ANN. My mind misgives me ; yet will I find patience.

SCENE III.—*Night in RIBERA's Garden.* DON JOHN *alone.*

DON JOHN. In any less than she, so swift a passion,
So unreserved, so reckless, had repelled.
In her 'tis godlike. Our mutual love
Was born full-grown, as we gazed each on each.
Nay, 'twas not born, but like a thing eternal,
It *was* ere we had consciousness thereof ;
No growth of slow development, but perfect
From the beginning, neither doomed to end.
Her garden breathes her own warm, southern beauty,

Glowing with dewy and voluptuous bloom.
Here I am happy—happy to dream and wait
In rich security of bliss. I know
How brief an interval divides us now.
She hastes to meet me with no less impatience
Than mine to clasp her in my arms, to press
Heart unto heart, and see the love within
The unfathomable depths of her great eyes.
She comes. Maria!

Enter MARIA, half timid, half joyous.

MAR. My lord! you have been waiting?

DON JOHN. Darling, not long; 'twas but my restless love
That drove me here before the promised hour.
So were I well content to wait through ages
Upon the threshold of a joy like this,
Knowing the gates of heaven might ope to me
At any moment.

MAR. Your love is less than mine,
For I have counted every tedious minute
Since our last meeting.

DON JOHN. I had rather speak
Less than the truth to have you chide me thus;
Yet if you enter in the lists with me,
Faith matched with faith, and loyal heart with heart,
I warrant you, the jealous god of love,
Who spies us now from yon pomegranate bush,
Would crown me victor.

MAR. Why should we compete?
Who could decide betwixt two equal truths,
Two perfect faiths?

DON JOHN. The worship of my life
Will be slight payment for your boundless trust.
Look we nor forth nor back, are we not happy?
Heaven smiles above our heads with all her stars.
The envious day forced us apart, the wing
Of obscure night protects and shelters us.
Now like a pure, night-blooming flower, puts forth
The perfect blossom of our love. Oh, lean
Thy royal head upon my breast; assure me
That this unheard-of bliss is no fond dream.
Cling to me, darling, till thy love's dear burden
Take root about my heart-strings.

MAR. *(after a pause)*. Did you not hear
A sound, a cry? Oh, God! was it my father?

DON JOHN. Naught save the beating of our hearts I heard.
Be calm, my love; the very air is hushed.
Listen, the tinkle of the fountain yonder,

The sleepy stir of leaves, the querulous pipe
Of some far bird—no more.

MAR. I heard, I heard!
A rude voice called me. Wherefore did it come
To snatch me from that dream of restful love?
Oh, Juan, you will save me, you will help,—
Tell me you will—I have lost all for you!

DON JOHN. To-morrow you will laugh at fears like these.
You have lost naught—you have but won my love.
Lose not your faith in that—your shield and weapon.

MAR. I tremble still in every limb. Good-night,
I must be gone. To-morrow when you come,
Be wary with my father; he is fierce
In love and hatred. Listen and look, my lord.
If one dared say to me but yester-morn
That I would meet at night a stranger youth
In mine own garden, talk with him of love,
And hint a thought against the Spagnoletto,
I had smitten with this bauble such a one.
(*Pointing to a jewelled poniard in her belt.*)
Kiss me, my Juan, once again. Good-night.
[Exit MARIA.]

SCENE IV.—*The Studio.* RIBERA and ANNICCA.

ANN. Has he come often?

RIB. Nay, I caught the trick
Of his fair face in some half-dozen sittings.
His is a bold and shapely head—it pleased me.
I like the lad; the work upon his portrait
Was pastime—'tis already nigh complete.

ANN. And has Maria sat here while you worked?

RIB. (*sharply*). Why not? What would'st thou say? Speak,
fret me not
With ticklish fears. Is she not by my side,
For work or rest?

ANN. Surely, I meant no harm.
Father, how quick you are! I had but asked
If she, being here, had seen the work progress,
And found it his true counterpart.

RIB. Annicca,
There is something in your thought you hold from me.
Have the lewd, prying eyes, the slanderous mind
Of public envy, spied herein some mischief?
What has thou heard? By heaven, if one foul word
Have darkened the fair fame of my white dove,

Naples shall rue it. Let them not forget
The chapel of Saint Januarius !

ANN. (*aside*). Tommaso judged aright. I dare not tell him.
Dear father, listen. Pray, be calm. Sit down ;
Your own hot rage engenders in my mind
Thoughts, fears, suspicions.

RIB. (*seating himself*). You are right, Annicca.
I am foolish, hasty ; but it makes me mad.
Listen to me. Here sits the Prince before me ;
We talk, we laugh. We have discussed all themes,
From the great Angelo's divinity,
Down to the pest of flies that fret us here
At the day's hottest. Sometimes he will pace
The studio—such young blood is seldom still.
He brought me once his mandoline, and drew
Eloquent music thence. I study thus
The changeful play of soul. I catch the spirit
Behind the veil, and burn it on the plate.
Maria comes and goes—will sit awhile
Over her broidery, then will haste away
And serve us with a dish of golden fruit.
That is for me ; she knows the sweet, cool juice,
After long hours of work, refreshes me
More than strong wine. She meets his Royal Highness
As the Ribera's child should meet a Prince—
Nor overbold, nor timid ; one would think
Their rank was equal, and that neither sprang
From less than royal lineage.

ANN. Why, I know it.
Here is no need to excuse or justify.
Speak rather of your work—is the plate finished ?

RIB. So nigh, that were Don John to leave to-morrow,
It might go with him.

ANN. What ! he leaves Naples ?

RIB. Yea, but I know not when ; he seems to wait
Momently orders from His Majesty
To travel onward.

ANN. (*aside*). Would he were well away !

RIB. What do you mutter ? I grow deaf this side.

ANN. I spake not, father. I regret with you
The Prince should leave us ; you have more enjoyed
His young companionship than any stranger's
These many years.

RIB. Well, well, enough of him.
He hath a winning air—so far, so good.
I know not that I place more trust in him
Than in another. 'Tis a lying world ;

I am too old now to be duped or dazzled
By fair externals.

(Enter MARIA, carrying a kirtle full of flowers.)

MAR. Father, see ! my roses
Have blossomed over night ; I bring you some
To prank your study. Sister, Don Tommaso
Seeks you below.

ANN. *(rising)*. I will go meet him. Father,
Until to-morrow. *[Embraces RIBERA and exit.]*

(MARIA sits by her father's side and displays her flowers.)

RIB. Truly, a gorgeous show !
Pink, yellow, crimson, white—which is the fairest ?
Those with the deepest blush should best become you—
Nay, they accord not with your hair's red gold ;
The white ones suit you best—pale, innocent,
So flowers too can lie ! Is not that strange ?

*(MARIA looks at him in mingled wonder and affright.
He roughly brushes aside all the flowers upon the floors,
then picks one up and carefully plucks it to pieces.)*

I think not highly of your flowers, girl ;
I have plucked this leaf by leaf ; it has no heart.
See there ! *(He laughs contemptuously.)*

MAR. What have I done ? Alas ! what mean you ?
Have you then lost your reason ?

RIB. Nay, but found it.

I, who was dull of wit, am keen at last.
“Don John is comely,” and “Don John is kind ;”
“A wonderful musician is Don John,”
“A princely artist—” and then, meek of mien,
You enter in his presence, modest, simple.
And who beneath that kitten grace had spied
The claws of mischief ? Who ! Why, all the world,
Save the fond, wrinkled, hoary fool, thy father.
Out, girl, for shame ! He will be here anon ;
Hence to your room—he shall not find you here.
Thank God, thank God ! no evil hath been wrought
That may not be repaired. I have sat by
At all your meetings. You shall have no more ;
Myself will look to that. Away, away !

[Exit MARIA.]

RIB. *(looks after her)*. As one who has received a deadly
hurt,

She walks. What if my doubts be false ? The terror
Of an unlooked-for blow, a treacherous thrust
When least expected—that is all she showed.
On a false charge, myself had acted thus.
She had been moved far otherwise if guilty ;

She had wept, protested, begged—she had not left
 With such a proud and speechless show of grief.
 I was too harsh, too quick on slight suspicion.
 What did Annicca say? Why, she said naught.
 'Twas her grave air, her sudden reticence,
 Her ill-assumed indifference. They play on me;
 They know me not. They dread my violent passions,
 Not guessing what a firm and constant bridle
 I hold them with. On just cause to be angered,
 Is merely human. Yet they sound my temper;
 They try to lead me like some half-tamed beast,
 That must be coaxed. Well, I may laugh thereat.
 But I am not myself to-day; strange pains
 Shoot through my head and limbs and vex my spirit.
 Oh, I have wronged my child! Return, Maria!

[Exit, calling.]

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—Night. RIBERA'S Bedroom. RIBERA discovered in his dressing-gown, seated reading beside a table, with a light upon it. Enter from an open door at the back of the stage, MARIA. She stands irresolute for a moment on the threshold behind her father, watching him, passes her hand rapidly over her brow and eyes, and then knocks.

MAR. May I come in, dear father?

RIB. (*putting down his book and looking at her affectionately*).
 Child, you ask?

MAR. (*advancing*). You study late. I came to bid good-night.

RIB. Poor child, thou must be weary. Thou art pale
 Still from thy swoon.

MAR. (*with a forced laugh*). I had forgotten it.
 Nay, I am well again.

RIB. But I forget it not,
 Neither forgive myself. Well, it is past,
 Enough! When the Prince left I sent for thee;
 Thou wast still sleeping?

MAR. (*with confusion*). Yes, I was outworn.
 What didst thou wish of me?

RIB. Merely to tell thee
 Don John leaves Naples. He expressed regret
 Most courteously that thou wast suffering.
 He had fain offered us his parting thanks
 For our kind welcome—so he deigned to say.
 To-morrow he may steal a moment's grace

To see us both once more ; but this is doubtful,
So he entrusted his farewells to me.

MAR. May peace go with him !

RIB. We are well alone—

Are we not, darling ? Thanks for the calm content
Wherewith thou biddest him farewell, to nestle
Once more in mine embrace. Not long, I feel,
May these old horny eyes be blest with sight
Of thy full-flowering grace, these wrinkled lips
Be pressed against thy brow. I am no more
What I have been ; at times both hand and brain
Refuse their task. Myself will follow soon—
The better part of me already dead.
So the worm claims us by slow torture, child.
Thou'lt bear with me, if as to-day I wrong
Thy gentle spirit ?

MAR. Father, no more, no more !

You break my heart.

RIB. Mine angel-child, weep not

So bitterly. I thought not thus to move thee.
Still thou art overwrought. I would have asked
At last a promise of thee. I am selfish,
But I would sleep less startingly o' nights,
And bear a calmer soul by day, were I secure
That thou wilt bide with me until the end. (*A pause.*)
To-night I will not press thee. Thou art weary ;
Thy nerves have scarce regained their tension yet ;
But from thy deep emotion I can see
'Twill cost thee less than I have feared. To-morrow
We will talk of this again.

MAR. To-morrow !

RIB. Now,

Good night. 'Tis time thou shouldst be sleeping.

MAR. Father,

I cannot leave thee ! Every word of thine
Gnaws like a burning coal my sore, soft heart.
What ! thou shalt suffer, and thine own Maria
Will leave thee daughterless, uncomforted ?
What ! thou shalt weep, and other eyes than mine
Shall see the Spagnoletto's spirit broken ?

RIB. There, there, poor child ! Look up, cling not so
wildly

About my neck. Thou art too finely touched,
If thus the faint foreshadow of a grief

Can overcome thee. Listen ! What was that ?

MAR. (*starts up, shudders violently, and, all at once, masters her
emotion.*) Why, I heard nothing, father.

- RIB. Yes, a sound
Of footsteps, and a stifled call.
(He goes toward the casement. MARIA tries to detain him.)
- MAR. Dear father,
Surely 'twas naught. Your ears deceive you. Hark,
The wind is rising, and you heard the leaves
Rustling together.
- RIB. Nay, I will look forth.
(He opens the casement and looks out in silence. MARIA stands behind him, with her hands clasped in an agony of fear.)
- RIB. *(calling).* Hist, answer! Who goes there? *(a pause.)*
No sound. Thou'rt right,
Maria; I see naught; our garden lies
Vacant and still, save for the swaying branches
Of bush and tree. 'Tis a wild, threatening night.
A sultry breeze is blowing, and the sky
Hangs black above Vesuvius. Yonder cloud
Hath lightnings in it. Ah, a blinding bolt
Dims the volcano's pillared fire. Enough.
(He closes the casement and returns to MARIA.)
Hark, how the thunder rolls! My child, you tremble
Like the blown leaves without.
- MAR. I am oppressed
By the same stormy influence. Thou knowest
I dread the thunder.
- RIB. Thou, who art safely housed,
Why shouldst thou dread it? Try to sleep, my darling;
Forget the terror of the tempest; morn
Will break again in sunshine.
- MAR. Father, say
You love me and you trust me once again,
Before I bid good night.
- RIB. If it will calm thee,
I love thee and I trust thee. Thou art to me
My genius—thou, the breathing image still
Of thy saint-mother, whom the angels guard.
Even as thou standest now, vested in white,
With glowing eyes and pale, unsmiling face,
I see her as she stood the day her heart
Went forth from home and kin to bless the stranger
Who craved her father's alms.
- MAR. Thanks, thanks. Good night.
God bless us through these wild, dark hours.
- RIB. Good night.

SCENE II.—RIBERA'S Garden. *Half the sky illuminated by an overclouded moon, the rest obscured by an approaching storm. Occasional thunder and lightning. On one side of the stage a summer-house open to the audience, on the other side the exterior of the dwelling. DON JOHN discovered waiting near the house. The door opens, and enter MARIA.*

DON JOHN (*springing forward and embracing her*). At last!
at last!

MAR. Juan, beware! My father's fears,
I cannot guess by whom or what, are roused.
(*She extends her arms gropingly to embrace him*). Oh, let me
feel thee near me—I see naught.

Follow me; here our voices may be heard.
(*She hastens towards the summer-house, leaning upon his arm, and
sinks upon a seat.*)

Have not slow ages passed with crowding woes
Since we last met! What have I not endured!
Oh, Juan, save me!

DON JOHN. Dearest child, be calm.
Thou art strangely overwrought. Speak not. Await
Till this wild fear be past.

MAR. How great you are!
Your simple presence stills and comforts me.
While you are here, the one thing real to me
In all the universe is love.

DON JOHN. And yet
My love is here, if I be far or nigh.
Is this the spirit of a soldier's wife?
Nay, fiery courage, iron fortitude,
That soul must own that dares to say, "I love."

MAR. And I dare say it. I can bear the worst
That envious fate may heap upon my head,
If thou art with me, or for hope of thee.

DON JOHN. Art sure of that? Thou couldst not part from
me,
Even for thy father's sake?

MAR. Talk you of parting?
For God's sake, what is this? You love no more?

DON JOHN. Rather I love so truly that I shrink
From asking thee to share a soldier's fate.
I tremble to uproot so fine a flower
From its dear native earth. I—

MAR. (*putting her hand on his lips*). Hush, no more!
I need no preparation more than this,
Your mere request.

DON JOHN. There spake my heroine.
The King, my father, bids me to repair
Unto Palermo.

MAR. Shall we sail to-night?

DON JOHN. My Princess! Thou recoilest not from all
Thou must endure, ere I can openly
Claim thee my wife?

MAR. The pangs of purgatory
Were lightly borne with such a heaven in view.
I were content with one brief hour a day,
Snatched from the toils of war and thy high duties,
To gaze on thy dear face—to feel thy hand,
Even as now a stay and a caress.

DON JOHN. Angel, I have no thanks. May God forget me
When I forget this hour! So, thou art firm—
Ready this night to leave thy home, thy kin,
Thy father?

MAR. (*solemnly*). I am ready and resolved.
Yet judge me not so lightly as to deem
I say this with no pang. My love were naught,
Could I withdraw it painlessly at once
From him round whose colossal strength the tendrils
Of mine own baby heart were taught to twine.
I speak not now as one who swerves or shrinks,
But merely, dear, to show thee what sharp tortures
I, nowise blind, but with deliberate soul,
Embrace for thee.

DON JOHN. How can I doubt the anguish
So rude a snapping of all ties must smite
Thy tender heart withal? Yet, dwell we not
On the brief pain, but on the enduring joys.
If the Ribera's love be all thou deemest,
He will forgive thy secret flight, thy—

MAR. Secret!
May I not bid farewell? May I not tell him
Where we are bound? How soon he may have hope
To hear from me—to welcome me, thy Princess?
I dare not leave him without hope.

DON JOHN. My child,
Thou art mad! We must be secret as the grave,
Else are we both undone. I have given out
That I depart in princely state to-morrow.
Far from the quay a bark awaiteth us.
I know my man. Shrouded by careful night,
We will set secret sail for Sicily.
Once in Palermo, thou mayst write thy father—
Sue for his pardon—tell him that, ere long,
When I have won by cautious policy
King Philip's favor, thou shalt be proclaimed
Princess of Austria.

MAR. (*who has hung upon his words with trembling excitement, covers her face with her hands, and bursts into tears*). I cannot! no, I cannot!

DON JOHN (*scornfully*). I feared as much. Well, it is better thus.

I asked thee not to front the "worst of ills
That envious fate could heap upon thy head—"

Only a little patience. 'Twas too much;
I cannot blame thee. 'Tis a loving father.
I, a mere stranger, had naught else to hope,
Matching my claim with his.

MAR. (*looks at him and throws herself at his feet*). Oh, pardon, pardon!

My Lord, my Prince, my husband! I am thine!
Lead wheresoe'er thou wilt, I follow thee.
Tell me a life's devotion may efface
The weakness of a moment!

DON JOHN (*raising her tenderly and embracing her*). Ah, mine own!

SCENE CLOSES.

SCENE III.—*Morning. The Studio. Enter RIBERA.*

RIB. How laughingly the clear sun shines to-day
On storm-drenched green, and cool, far-glittering seas!
When she comes in to greet me, she will blush
For last night's terrors. How she crouched and shud-
dered

At the mere thought of the wild war without!
Poor, clinging women's souls, what need is theirs
Of our protecting love! Yet even on me
The shadow of the storm-cloud seemed to brood.
Through my vexed sleep I heard the thunder roll;
My dreams were ugly— Well, all that is past;
To-day my spirit is renewed. 'Tis long
Since I have felt so fresh. (*He seats himself before his
easel and takes up his brush and palette, but holds them
idly in his hand.*)

Strange, she still sleeps!
The hour is past when she is wont to come
To bless me with the kiss of virgin love.
Mayhap 'twas fever in her eyes last night
Gave them so wild a glance, so bright a lustre.
God! if she should be ill! (*He rises and calls.*) Luca!

Enter LUCA.

LUCA. My lord?

RIB. Go ask Fiametta if the mistress sleeps—
If she be ailing—why she has not come
This morn to greet me.

[Exit LUCA.]

RIB. (*begins pacing the stage*). What fond fears are these
Mastering my spirit? Since her mother died
I tremble at the name of pain or ill.
How can my rude love tend, my hard hand soothe,
The dear child's fragile— (*A confused cry without.*)

What is that? My God!

How hast thou stricken me? (*He staggers and falls into
a chair. Enter hastily FIAMETTA, weeping, and LUCA
with gestures of terror and distress.*)

FIA. Master!

LUCA. Dear master!

(*RIBERA rises with a great effort and confronts them.*)

RIB. What is it? Speak!

LUCA. Dear master, she is gone.

RIB. How? Murdered—dead? Oh, cruel God! Away!

Follow me not!

[Exit RIBERA.]

FIA. Help, all ye saints of heaven!

Have pity on him! Oh, what a day is this!

LUCA. Quiet, Fiametta. When the master finds

The empty, untouched bed, the silent room,

His wits will leave him. Hark! was that his cry?

Reënter RIBERA calling.

RIB. Maria! Daughter! Where have they taken thee,
My only one, my darling? Oh, the brigands!
Naples shall bleed for this. What do ye here,
Slaves, fools, who stare upon me? Know ye not
I have been robbed? Hence! Ransack every house
From cave to roof in Naples. Search all streets.
Arrest whomso ye meet. Let no sail stir
From out the harbor. Ring the alarum! Quick!
This is a general woe.

[*Exeunt LUCA and FIAMETTA.*

The Duke's my friend;

He'll further me. The Prince—oh, hideous fear!—

No, no, I will not dream it. Mine enemies

Have done this thing; the avengers of that beggar—

Domenichino—they have struck home at last.

How was it that I heard no sound, no cry,

Throughout the night? The heavens themselves con-
spired

Against me—the hoarse thunder drowned her shrieks!

Oh, agony! (*He buries his face in his hands. Enter AN-
NICCA; she throws herself speechless and weeping upon
his neck.*)

Thou knowest it, Annicca!

The thief has entered in the night—she's gone.
I stand and weep; I stir not hand or foot.
Is not the household roused? Do they not seek her?
I am helpless, weak; an old man over night.
The brigands' work was easy. I heard naught.
But surely, surely, had they murdered her,
I had heard that—that would have wakened me
From out my grave.

ANN. Father, she is not dead.

RIB. (*wildly*). Where have they found her? What dost
thou know?

Speak, speak,

Ere my heart break.

ANN. Alas! they have not found her;
But that were easy. Nerve thyself—remember
Thou art the Spagnoletto still. Last night
Don John fled secretly from Naples.

RIB. Ah!

Give me a draught of water. (*He sinks down on his chair.*)

ANN. (*calling*). Help, Tommaso!

Luca! Fiametta! Father, look up, look up!

Gaze not so hollowly. (*Enter DON TOMMASO and SER-
VANTS.*) Quick! water, water!

Do ye not see he swoons?

(*She kneels before her father, chafing and kissing his hands. Exit*

*LUCA, who returns immediately with a silver flagon of water.

ANNICCA seizes it and raises it to RIBERA's lips. He takes it
from her hand and drinks.)

RIB. How your hand trembles!

See, mine is firm. You had spilt it o'er my beard

Had I not saved it. Thanks. I am strong again.

I am very old for such a steady grasp.

Why, girl, most men as hoary as thy father

Are long since palsied. But my firm touch comes

From handling of the brush. I am a painter,

The Spagnoletto— (*As he speaks his name he suddenly
throws off his apathy, rises to his full height, and
casts the flagon to the ground.*)

Ah, the Spagnoletto,

Disgraced, abandoned! My exalted name

The laughing-stock of churls; my hearthstone stamped

With everlasting shame; my pride, my fame,

Mine honor—where are they? With yon spilt water,

Fouled in the dust, sucked by the thirsty air.

Now, by Christ's blood, my vengeance shall be huge

As mine affront. I will demand full justice

From Philip. We will treat as King with King.
He shall be stripped of rank and name and wealth,
 Degraded, lopped from off the fellowship
 Of Christians like a rotten limb, proclaimed
 The bastard that he is. She shall go with him,
 Linked in a common infamy, haled round,
 A female Judas, who betrayed her father,
 Her God, her conscience with a kiss. Her shadow
 Shall be my curse. Cursed be her sleep by night,
 Accursed her light by day—her meat and drink!
 Accursed the fruit of her own womb—the grave
 Where she will lie! Cursed—Oh, my child, my child!
*(He throws himself on the ground and buries his head
 among the cushions of the couch. DON TOMMASO ad-
 vances and lays his hand on RIBERA's shoulder.)*

DON TOM. Mine honored sir—

RIB. *(Looks up without rising)*. Surely you mock me, signor.
 Honored! Yes, honored with a rifled home,
 A desecrated hearth, a strumpet child.
 For honors such as these, I have not stinted
 Sweat, blood, or spirit through long years of toil.
 I have passed through peril scatheless; I was spared
 When Naples was plague-stricken; I have 'scaped
 Mine enemies' stiletto—fire and flood;
 I have survived my love, my youth, my self,
 My thrice-blest Leonora, whom I pitied,
 Fool that I was! in her void, silent tomb.
 The God of mercy hath reserved me truly
 For a wise purpose.

ANN. Father, rise; take courage;
 We know not yet the end.

RIB. Why should I rise
 To front the level eyes of men's contempt?
 Oh, I am shamed! Cover my head, Annicca;
 Darken mine eyes and veil my face. Oh, God,
 Would that I were a nameless, obscure man,
 So could I bury with me my disgrace,
 That now must be immortal. Where thou standest,
 Annicca, there she stood last night. She kissed me;
 Round mine old neck she wreathed her soft, young arms.
 My wrinkled cheeks were wet with her warm tears.
 She shuddered, and I thought it was the thunder
 Struck terror through her soul. White-bearded fool!

FIA. I found this scrip upon the chamber-floor,
 Mayhap it brings some comfort.

RIB. *(Starts up and snatches the paper she offers him, reads it
 rapidly, then to ANNICCA wildly.)*

Look, look there—
'Tis writ in blood: "My duty to my lord
Forbids my telling you our present port."
I would track her down with sleuth-hounds, did I not
Abhor to see her face. Ah, press thy hands
Against my head—my brain is like to burst—
My throat is choked. Help! help! (He swoons.)

SCENE IV.—*A Street. Enter LORENZO and a GENTLEMAN, meeting. They salute, and LORENZO is about to pass on.*

LOR. Good morning, sir.

GENT. Hail and farewell so soon,
Friend dreamer? I will lay a goodly sum
The news that flies like fire from tongue to tongue
Hath not yet warmed thine ear.

LOR. What's that? I lay
A sum as fair thy news is some dry tale
Of courtly gossip, touching me as nigh
As the dissensions of the antipodes.

GENT. Done for a hundred florins! In the night,
Midst the wild storm whose roar must have invaded
Even thy leaden sleep, Prince John left Naples.
We should have had a pageant here to-day,
A royal exit, floral arches thrown
From house to house in all the streets he passed,
Music and guards of honor, homage fitting
The son of Philip—but the bird has flown.

LOR. So! I regret our busy citizens,
Who sun themselves day-long upon the quays,
Should be deprived of such a festival.
Your wager's lost—how am I moved by this?

GENT. Hark to the end. 'Twould move all men whose veins
Flow not clear water. He hath carried off
The Rose of Naples.

LOR. What wouldst thou say? Speak out.
In God's name, who hath followed him?

GENT. Ah, thou'rt roused.
Thy master hath been robbed—the Spagnoletto—
Maria of the Golden Locks—his daughter.

LOR. How is this known? 'Tis a foul slander forged
By desperate malice. What, in the night, you say?
She whose bright name was clean as gold, whose heart
Shone a fixed star of loyal love and duty
Beside her father's glory! This coarse lie
Denies itself. I will go seek the master,

And if this very noon she walk not forth,
Led by the Spagnoletto, through the streets,
To blind the dazed eyes of her slanderers,—
I am your debtor for a hundred florins.

GENT. Your faith in womanhood becomes you, sir.

(*Aside.*) A beggar's child the mistress of a Prince;
Humph! there be some might think the weight of
scandal

Lay on the other side. (*To Lorenzo.*) You need not
forth

To seek her father. See, he comes, alone.
I will not meddle in this broil. Farewell.

(*Exit GENTLEMAN. Enter RIBERA, without hat or mantle, slowly, with
folded arms and bent head.*)

LOR. Oh heart, break not for pity! Shall he thus
Unto all Naples blazon his disgrace?

This must not be (*advancing*). Father!

RIB. (*starts and looks up sharply*). Who calls me father?

LOR. Why, master, I—you know me not? Lorenzo.

RIB. Nor do I care to know thee. Thou must be
An arrant coward, thus to league with foes
Against so poor a wretch as I—to call me
By the most curst, despised, unhallowed name
God's creatures own. Away! and let me pass;
I injure no man.

LOR. Look at me, dear master.

Your head is bare, your face is ashy pale,
The sun is fierce. I am your friend, your pupil;
Let me but guide my reverend master home,
In token of the grateful memory
Wherein I hold his guidance of my mind
Up the steep paths of art.

(*While LORENZO speaks, RIBERA slowly gains consciousness of his situation, raises his hand to his head, and shudders violently. LORENZO's last words seem to awaken him thoroughly.*)

RIB. I crave your pardon,

If I have answered roughly, Sir Lorenzo.
My thoughts were far away—I failed to know you—
I have had trouble, sir. You do remind me,
I had forgot my hat; that is a trifle,
Yet now I feel the loss. What slaves are we
To circumstance! One who is wont to cover
For fashion or for warmth his pate, goes forth
Bareheaded, and the sun will seem to smite
The shrinking spot, the breeze will make him shiver,
And yet our hatless beggars heed them not.
We are the fools of habit.

Enter two gentlemen together as promenading ; they cross the stage, looking hard at RIBERA and LORENZO, and exeunt.

LOR. Pray you, sir,

Let me conduct you home. Here is no place
To hold discourse. In God's name, come with me.

RIB. What coupled staring fools were they that passed ?
They seemed to scare thee. Why, boy, face them out.
I am the shadow of the Spagnoletto,
Else had I brooked no gaze so insolent.
Well, I will go with thee. But, hark thee, lad ;
A word first in thine ear. 'Tis a grim secret ;
Whisper it not in Naples ; I but tell thee,
Lest thou should fancy I had lost my wits.
My daughter hath deserted me—hath fled
From Naples with a bastard. Thou hast seen her,
Maria-Rosa—thou must remember her ;
She, whom I painted as Madonna once.
She had fair hair and Spanish eyes. When was it ?
I came forth thinking I might meet with her
And find all this a dream—a foolish thought !
I am very weary. (*Yawning*). I have walked and
walked

For hours. How far, sir, stand we from the Strada
Nardo ? I live there, nigh Saint Francis' church.

LOR. Why, 'tis hard by ; a stone's throw from this square.
So, lean on me—you are not well. This way.
Pluck up good heart, sir ; we shall soon be there.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE V.—*Night. A Room in RIBERA's House. ANNICCA seated alone in an attitude of extreme weariness and despondency.*

ANN. His heavy sleep still lasts. Despite the words
Of the physician, I can cast not off
That ghastly fear. Albeit he owned no drugs,
This deathlike slumber, this deep breathing slow,
His livid pallor makes me dread each moment
His weary pulse will cease. This is the end,
And from the first I knew it. The worst evil
My warning tongue had wrought were joy to this.
No heavier curse could I invoke on her
Than that she see him in her dreams, her thoughts,
As he is now. I could no longer bear it ;
I have fled hither from his couch to breathe—
To quicken my spent courage for the end.
I cannot pray—my heart is full of curses.
He sleeps ; he rests. What better could I wish

For his rent heart, his stunned, unbalanced brain,
Than sleep to be eternally prolonged?

(Enter FIAMETTA. ANNICCA looks up anxiously, half rising.)

ANN. How now? What news?

FIA. The master is awake

And calls for you, signora.

ANN. Heaven be praised! [Exit hastily.]

FIA. Would I had followed my young mistress! Here

I creep about like a scared, guilty thing,

And fancy at each moment they will guess

'Twas I who led her to the hut. I will confess,

If any sin there be, to Father Clement,

And buy indulgence with her golden chain.

'Twould burn my throat, the master's rolling eyes

Would haunt me ever, if I went to wear it.

So, all will yet be well.

[Exit.]

SCENE VI.—RIBERA'S Room. RIBERA discovered sitting on the couch. He looks old and haggard, but has regained his natural bearing and expression. Enter ANNICCA. She hastens towards him, and kneels beside the couch, kissing him affectionately.

ANN. Father, you called me?

RIB. Aye, to bid good-night.

Why do you kiss me? To betray to-morrow?

ANN. Dear father, you are better; you have slept.

Are you not rested?

RIB. Child, I was not weary.

There was some cloud pressed here (*pointing to his forehead*), but that is past.

I have no pain nor any sense of ill.

Now, while my brain is clear, I have a word

To speak. I think not I have been to thee,

Nor to that other one, an unkind father.

I do not now remember any act,

Or any word of mine, could cause thee grief.

But I am old—perchance my memory

Deceives in this? Speak! Am I right, Annicca?

ANN. (*weeping*). Oh, father, father, why will you torture me?

You were too good, too good.

RIB. Why, so I thought.

Since it appears the guerdon of such goodness

Is treachery, abandonment, disgrace,

I here renounce my fatherhood. No child

Will I acknowledge mine. Thou art a wife;

Thy duty is thy husband's. When Antonio

Returns from Seville, tell him that his father
Is long since dead. Henceforward I will own
No kin, no home, no tie. I will away,
To-morrow morn, and live an anchorite.
One thing ye cannot rob me of—my work.
My name shall still outsoar these low, mirk vapors—
Not the Ribera, stained with sin and shame.
As she hath left it, but the Spagnoletto.
My glory is mine own. I have done with it,
But I bequeath it to my country. Now
I will make friends with beasts—they'll prove less
savage

Than she that was my daughter. I have spoken
For the last time that word. Thee I curse not.
Thou hast not set thy heel upon my heart.
But yet I will not bless thee. Go. Good-night.

ANN. (*embracing him*). What! will you spurn me thus? Nay,
I will bide,

And be to thee all that she should have been,
Soothe thy declining years, and heal the wound
Of this sharp sorrow. Thou shalt bless me still,
Father—

(*RIBERA has yielded for a moment to her embrace; but, suddenly rising,
he pushes her roughly from him.*)

RIB. Away! I know thee. Thou art one
With her who duped me with like words last night.
Then I believed; but now my sense is closed,
My heart is dead as stone. I cast thee forth.
By heaven, I own thee not! Thou dost forget
I am the Spagnoletto. Away, I say,
Or ere I strike thee. (*He threatens her.*)

ANN. Woe is me! Help, help!

[*Exit*

RIB. So, the last link is snapt. Had I not steeled
My heart, I fain had kissed her in farewell.
'Tis better so. I leave my work unfinished.
Could I arise each day to face this spectre,
Or sleep with it at night?—to yearn for her
Even while I curse her? No! The dead remain
Sacred and sweet in our remembrance still;
They seem not to have left us; they abide
And linger nigh us in the viewless air.
The fallen, the guilty, must be rooted out
From heart and thought and memory. With them
No hope of blest reunion; they must be
As though they had not been; their spoken name
Cuts like a knife. When I essay to think
Of what hath passed to-day, my sick brain reels.

The letter I remember, but all since
 Floats in a mist of horror, and I grasp
 No actual form. Did I not wander forth?
 A mob surrounded me. All Naples knew
 My downfall, and the street was paved with eyes
 That stared into my soul. Then friendly hands
 Guided me hither. When I woke, I felt
 As though a stone had rolled from off my brain.
 But still this nightmare bides the truth. I know
 They watch me, they suspect me. I will wait
 Till the whole household sleep, and then steal forth,
 Nor unavenged return.

A C T V.

SCENE I.—*A Room in DON TOMMASO'S House. ANNICCA discovered, attired in mourning. Enter DON TOMMASO.*

DON TOM. If he still live, now shall we hear of him.
 The news I learn will lure him from his covert,
 Where'er it lie, to pardon or avenge.

ANN. (*eagerly*). What news? What cheer, Tommaso?

DON TOM. Meagre cheer,
 But tidings that break through our slow suspense,
 Like the first thunder-clap in sultry air.
 Don John sets sail from Sicily, to wed
 A Princess chosen by the King. Maria—

ANN. Talk not of her—I know her not; her name
 Will sear thy tongue. Think'st thou, in truth, this news
 Will draw my father from his hiding-place?
 No—teach me not to hope. Within my heart
 A sure voice tells me he is dead. Not his
 The spirit to drag out a shameful life,
 To shrink from honest eyes, to sink his brow
 Unto the dust, here where he wore his crown.
 Thou knowest him. Have I not cause to mourn
 Uncomforted, that he, the first of fathers,
 Self-murdered—nay, child-murdered— Oh, Tommaso,
 I would fare barefoot to the ends of the earth
 To look again upon his living face,
 See in his eyes the light of love restored—
 Not blasting me with lightnings as before—
 To kneel to him, to solace him, to win
 For mine own head, yoked in my sister's curse.
 The blessing he refused me.

DON TOM. Well, take comfort;
 This grace may yet be thine.

SCENE II.—*Palermo. A Nunnery. Enter ABBESS, followed by a Lay-Sister.*

ABBESS. Is the poor creature roused?

LAY-SISTER. Nay, she still sleeps.

'Twould break your pious heart to see her, mother.
She begged our meanest cell, though 'tis past doubt
She has been bred to delicate luxury.

I deemed her spent, had not the soft breast heaved
As gently as a babe's, and even in dreams
Two crystal drops oozed from her swollen lids,
And trickled down her cheeks. Her grief sleeps not,
Although the fragile body craves its rest.

ABBESS. Poor child! I fear she hath sore need of prayer.
Hath she yet spoken?

LAY-SISTER. Only such scant words
Of thanks or answer as our proffered service
Or questionings demand. When we are silent,
Even if she wake, she seemeth unaware
Of any presence. She will sit and wail,
Rocking upon the ground, with dull, wide eyes,
Wherefrom the streaming tears unceasing course;
The only sound that then escapes her lips
Is, "Father, Father!" in such piteous strain
As though her rent heart bled to utter it.

ABBESS. Still she abides then by her first request
To take the black veil and its vows to-morrow?

LAY-SISTER. Yea, to that purpose desperately she clings.
This evening, if she rouse, she makes confession.
Even now a holy friar waits without,
Fra Bruno, of the order of Carthusians,
Beyond Palermo.

ABBESS. I will speak with him,
Ere he confess her, since we know him not.
Follow me, child, and see if she have waked.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A Cell in the Nunnery. MARIA discovered asleep on a straw pallet. She starts suddenly from her sleep with a little cry, half rises and remains seated on her pallet.*

MAR. Oh, that wild dream! My weary bones still ache
With the fierce pain; they wrenched me limb from
limb.

Thou hadst full cause, my father. But thou, Juan,
What was my sin to thee, save too much love?
Oh, would to God my back were crooked with age,

My smooth cheek seamed with wrinkles, my bright hair
 Hoary with years, and my quick blood impeded
 By sluggish torpor, so were I near the end
 Of woes that seem eternal ! I am strong—
 Death will not rescue me. Within my veins
 I feel the vigorous pulses of young life,
 Refusing my release. My heart at times
 Rebels against the habit of despair,
 And, ere I am aware, has wandered back,
 Among forbidden paths. What prayer, what penance,
 Will shrive me clean before the sight of Heaven?
 My hands are black with parricide. Why else
 Should his dead face arise three nights before me,
 Bleached, ghastly, dripping as of one that's drowned,
 To freeze my heart with horror ? Christ, have mercy !
(She covers her face with her hands in an agony of despair.)

Enter a MONK.)

THE MONK. May peace be in this place !

(MARIA shudders violently at the sound of his voice ; looks up and sees the MONK with bent head, and hands partially extended, as one who invokes a blessing. She rises, falls at his feet, and takes the hem of his skirt between her hands, pressing it to her lips.)

MAR. Welcome, thrice welcome !

Bid me not rise, nor bless me with pure hands.
 Ask not to see my face. Here let me lie,
 Kissing the dust—a cast-away, a trait'ress,
 A murderess, a parricide !

MONK. Accursed

With all Hell's curses is the crime thou nam'st !
 What devil moved thee ? Who and whence art thou,
 That wear'st the form of woman, though thou lack'st
 The heart of the she-wolf ? Who was thy parent,
 What fiend of torture, that thine impious hands
 Should quench the living source of thine own life ?

MAR. Spare me ! oh, spare me ! Nay, my hands are clean.

He was the first, best, noblest among men.
 I was his light, his soul, his breath of life.
 These I withdrew from him, and made his days
 A darkness. Yet, perchance he is not dead,
 And blood and tears may wash away my guilt.
 On, tell me there is hope, though it gleam far—
 One solitary ray, one steadfast spark,
 Beyond a million years of purgatory !
 My burning soul thirsts for the dewy balm
 Of comfortable grace. One word, one word,
 Or ere I perish of despair !

MONK.

What word ?

The one wherewith thou badst thy father hope?
What though he be not dead? Is breathing life?
Hast thou not murdered him in spirit ?—dealt
The death-blow to his heart ? Cheat not thy soul
With empty dreams—thy God hath judged thee guilty!

MAR. Have pity, father ! Let me tell thee all.

Thou, cloistered, holy and austere, know'st not
My glittering temptations. My betrayer
Was of an angel's aspect. His were all gifts,
All grace, all seeming virtue. I was plunged,
Deaf, dumb, and blind, and hand-bound in the deep.
If a poor drowning creature craved thine aid,
Thou wouldst not spurn it. Such a one am I,
And all the waves roll over me. Help, help!
Let me not perish! Wrest me from my doom!
Say not that I am lost!

MONK.

I can but say

What the just Spirit prompts. Myself am naught
To pardon or condemn. The sin is sinned ;
The fruit forbid is tasted, yea, and pressed
Of its last honeyed juices. Wilt thou now
Escape the after-bitterness with prayers,
Scourgings, and wringings of the hands ? Shall these
Undo what has been done ?—make whole the heart
Thy crime hath snapt in twain ?—restore the wits
Thy sin hath scattered ? No! Thy punishment
Is huge as thine offense. Death shall not help,
Neither shall pious life wash out the stain.
Living thou'rt doomed, and dead, thou shalt be lost,
Beyond salvation.

MAR. (*springing to her feet*). Impious priest, thou liest!

God will have mercy—as my father would,
Could he but see me in mine agony !

(*The MONK throws back his cowl and discovers himself as
the SPAGNOLETTA. MARIA utters a piercing cry and
throws herself speechless at his feet.*)

RIB. Thou know'st me not. I am not what I was.

My outward shape remains unchanged ; these eyes,
Now gloating on thine anguish, are the same
That wept to see a shadow cross thy brow ;
These ears, that drink the music of thy groans,
Shrank from thy lightest sigh of melancholy.
Thou think'st to find the father in me still?
Thy parricidal hands have murdered him—
Thou shalt not find a man. I am the spirit
Of blind revenge—a brute, unswerving force.

What deemest thou hath bound me unto life?

Ambition, pleasure, or the sense of fear?

What, but the sure hope of this fierce, glad hour,
That I might track thee down to this—might see
Thy tortured body writhe beneath my feet,
And blast thy stricken spirit with my curse?

MAR. (*in a crushed voice*). Have mercy! mercy!

RIB. Yes, I will have mercy—

The mercy of the tiger or the wolf,
Athirst for blood.

MAR. (*terror-struck, rises upon her knees in an attitude of supplication. RIBERA averts his face.*)

Oh, father, kill me not!

Turn not away—I am not changed for thee!

In God's name, look at me—thy child, thine own!

Spare me, oh, spare me, till I win of Heaven

Some sign of promise! I am lost forever

If I die now.

RIB. (*looks at her in silence, then pushing her from him, laughs bitterly.*)

Nay, have no fear of me.

I would not do thee that much grace to ease thee
Of the gross burden of the flesh. Behold,

Thou shalt be cursed with weary length of days;

And when thou seek'st to purge thy guilty heart,

Thou shalt find there a sin no prayer may shrive—

The murder of thy father. To all dreams

That haunt thee of past anguish, shall be added

The vision of this horror!

(*He draws from his girdle a dagger and stabs himself to the heart; he falls and dies, and MARIA flings herself, swooning, upon his body.*)

THE END.



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